

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

November 7, 2022

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar and Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Mark Boeschen, Bruce DeBlieck, Jason Hulstein (via Zoom), Roger Imdieke, Tony Kirby (via Zoom), Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson (via Zoom), Rollie Nissen, David Sisser and Brian Zawierucha (via Zoom)

Excused: Donna Boonstra and Dean Bouta

Absent: Goldie Smith

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal and Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:12 a.m.

AGENDA—Chair Boeschen added under New Business a report from David Sisser regarding the City of Willmar’s Request for Proposal (RFP) for city-wide high-speed internet. The date of the next EDC Broadband Committee meeting was changed to December 12, 2022 due to a conflict with another meeting.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Kleindl, SECONDED BY Rollie Nissen, to approve the Minutes of the October 3, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS—

TDS Non-Disclosure Agreement. Chair Boeschen signed a non-disclosure agreement with TDS on behalf of the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee in hopes of avoiding overlap in service areas. The *West Central Tribune* reported TDS plans to install 1-gigabit broadband connections in New London, Spicer, Pennock, Brooten and Danube. Chair Boeschen is not aware of any other TDS projects in Kandiyohi County. Revisiting the Mediacom project will be considered after the Border-to-Border grants are awarded. Chair Boeschen is hopeful that communication with TDS will help the committee use tax-payer dollars appropriately.

Legislative involvement was discussed. Local candidates have been advocating for broadband, but the state candidates have been silent. A meeting with state legislators before the next legislative session was suggested

as well as inviting them to the next committee meeting. If they choose to attend, a focused message should be planned with no more than three bullet points to address.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

CURRENT PROJECTS.

Long Lake – Vibrant. Installation is taking place on the northwest side of Long Lake. Vibrant awaits approval from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to complete installation along the Highway 23 corridor.

199th Avenue NE – Charter. The 199th Avenue Northeast project was completed below budget by \$2,495. New London Township will receive an invoice for \$5,915.22. When projects are completed under budget the township's payment is reduced proportionately.

141st Avenue NE – Charter. Charter has received the necessary permit for the boat access area and the ditch has been flagged for digging, which bodes well for completing the project this year.

Riverwood – Charter. Chair Boeschen requested an update but did not receive a response. According to the last available information, the project was delayed while waiting for supplies. The Riverwood project will consist of fiber to the home.

Prinsburg – Arvig. The Arvig project in Prinsburg is scheduled for completion by the end of 2022 or early in 2023.

GRANTS.

Border-to-Border Grant 2022. Chair Boeschen reported Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC) has not yet received information regarding Border-to-Border grant awards. The State of Minnesota plans to announce the awards before the end of fall. FTC received no challenges to its application. Grant requests are approximately three times higher than available funds. FTC and Vibrant Broadband are deemed eligible for United States Economic Development Administration grants, which has \$2 million available for projects tied to businesses and jobs.

ReConnect 4. Vibrant Broadband will apply for a ReConnect 4 grant, however, it will be a smaller area than what was covered in the ReConnect 3 grant application due to rule changes regarding the definition of "rural." The grant area includes the northeast side of Kandiyohi County.

County Line Extension Grant. Chair Boeschen reported the County Line Extension Grant will begin after the workflow has been established and providers have agreed to participate. The county program is similar to the state Broadband Line Extension Connection Program, however, the state will fund entire projects while the county will fund 60 percent of each approved project. Applicants for the state program will enter their name in a database and providers will provide a price quote. The program is limited to those who cannot be served any other way. The county program is necessary because it is not known if the state will have enough funds to cover everyone who applies. State applications are limited to \$20,000 per site.

ARPA Funds. Larry Kleindl reported he has prepared a book listing usage of ARPA funds for broadband purposes to ensure a smooth transition when he retires. Kelsey Baker, who will succeed Kleindl as Kandiyohi County Administrator, will be invited to the December Broadband Committee meeting.

REPORTS—

Mediacom. Chair Boeschen reported there is a potential project with Mediacom pending Border-to-Border Grant results.

Rural Broadband Coalition. Swedburg reported nothing new with the Rural Broadband Coalition. Michelle Marotzke is considering joining the Coalition’s leadership team.

City of Willmar Broadband RFP Committee. Sisser reported the Willmar Broadband Committee will put in a recommendation to the City Council to gather information about what is currently installed for broadband in Willmar, who the providers are and what speeds are obtained in residential and business areas. They will hire a company to compile this information. The information will be used to determine the next steps in the process.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, December 12, 2022** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.